

Zen Practice

Each existence, animate and inanimate, is changing during every moment day and night. The change is like flowing water which does not ever come back and which reveals its true nature in its eternal travel.

Water flowing and clouds drifting are similar to a well-trained old Zen Master. The true nature of water and clouds is like the determined, single-minded, traveling monks, who do not take off their traveling sandals even under the roof of sages. Worldly pleasure, philosophical pursuit, or whimsical ideas do not interest the traveling monk, sincere to his true nature; for he does not want to be fat and idle. Such a monk does not care for hospitality which would stop his travels. He recognizes as true friends only those who travel with him on the way.

Wabi or Sabi

The idea of this kind of travel may make you feel lonely and helpless.

In Japan Zen is understood by the word wabi or sabi. These two words are nouns, but today they are used mostly as adjectives: wabishi or sabishi. One meaning of wabishi and sabishi is lonesome and monotonous. The intellectuals understand these words to mean the simplest and most humble form and style of beauty.

In the strict sense wabi and sabi mean reality which does not belong to any category of subjective or objective, simple or fancy. However, it is this reality which makes subjective and objective observation possible and perfect, and which makes everything (simple or fancy) able to come home to our heart. In the realm of wabi or sabi, even on one drop of dew you will see the whole universe.

Acceptance or Analysis

Contrary to wabi and sabi, usually when some object is put into the range of perception, our first reaction is not acceptance, but rather rationality, repulsion, or emotional disturbance. The way of western civilization is not directed at acceptance so much as at "how to organize many objects and ideas in the realm of perception or thinking" and "how to control the sense data of the sensual world."



Introduction to the Main Subject

In the world of wabi and sabi there is no attempt, no attainment, no anger, joy, sorrow, or any waves of mind of this kind whatsoever. Each existence in this world is the fruit of subjective self-training and objective pure and direct understanding. The savor of fruits comes home to our heart, and confirmation of reality takes place. We observe falling flowers at their best. By repeating this kind of direct experience, one may have calm and deep understanding of life and deliverance from it, like a traveling monk who has full appreciation of everything and is nonetheless completely detached from it.

Now may I call your attention to the following subject:

Main Subject

Attention! Um-mon introduced the subject saying: I do not ask you about fifteen days ago. But, fifteen days hence? Come, say a word or verse about this. He himself replied for them: Every day is a good day.

Note: Today does not become yesterday and Dogen Zenji states that today does not become tomorrow. Each day is its own past and future and has its own absolute value.